History of Hymn Singing

Introduction:

Have you ever wondered how many Hymns you will sing in an average life time? On the average, if you lived to the age of 75 and attended the typical LDS religious services on the Sabbath and week day YM/YW, it would amount to over 16,000 Hymns. That does not include Seminary/Institute, and other church meetings you would attend during your life.

Richly blessed with an inheritance of Hymns. [*See Seton PP. 1-3]
The Psalms

Bible Dictionary:

Read contents from bible dictionary.
C. S. Lewis “the Psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung, not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons”

From the Hebrew [tehillim]

Often referred to as “The Hymn book of the second temple.

Music Notation:

1. Mizmor = denotes a composition set to music and accompanied with a musical instrument. Found in the titles of many Psalms

2. Neginah, Neginoth = stringed instruments [Pss. 4, 54-55, 61, 67, 76 and Hab.3:19]

3. Nehiloth = wind instruments [Pss 5]

4. Al amoth, set to = Maidens [type of vocalists, falsetto voice of males, or treble clef] (al = according to)

5. Sheminith, set to = at the octave (below) [Pss 6,12]

6. Maschil = giving instruction [an indication of how to sing the Psalm i.e. Fervently #105 Master, the Tempest Is Raging or Worshipfully #181 Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King.

7. Maschil = making wise or skillful [Pss 32, 34, 44-45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88-89, 142 reflect extremely chastening experiences]

8. Michtam = as indicated by some to mean “Golden Psalm” [Pss 16, 56-60] May indicate the idea of “to cover” which is related to the Atonement.

9. Shiggaion = may refer to the irregular erratic style of the composition

10. Selah = unknown but may indicate to sing or play forte or crescendo. My also mean for the singers to “lift up” their hands.
New Testament Hymns

Examples of Hymn Singing:
Matthew 26:30 (Mark 14:22)
“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”
Acts 16:25
“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”
Ephesians 5:19
Paul instructed the saints of his day to: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
and
Colossians 3:16
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Possible Hymn Texts from New Testament
1 Timothy 3:16
1 Timothy 1:15
1 Timothy 6:15-16
Ephesians 5:14
2 Timothy 2:11-13
Titus 3:4-7
James 1:17

Early Christian Support and non-Support for Singing in Church
Council at Antioch in Syria (c. 246)
Supported the first century practice of the singing of hymns by the president or leader with male and female choirs singing alternately, while the congregation joined in a refrain.

Council at Agde in Southern France (c. 506)
Ordered hymns for both morning and evening services.

Council at Toledo in Spain
Invoked the names of Christ and His apostles (scripture ref.) In support of hymn singing, and decreed: “Those should be excommunicated who shall dare to” reject the custom.

Council of Braga (c. 550)
Condemned the use of hymns, in religious services.
Early Greek Influence

Hebrew scriptures were translated in Greek. [Septuagint, LXX] Became the Bible of the earliest Christians (Old testament). New Testament was in the process of being written.

Earliest Christian Hymns spread through out the Mediterranean area on a common language, Greek

About A.D. 112, a Roman official, Pliny the Younger, reported to the Emperor Trajan that in the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor, Christians were then singing “a song to Christ as a God.”

Earliest Hymn whose words have come down to us today is from Clement of Alexandria (a. 155-220). “Brıdles of colts untamed”. The hymn now known as “shepherd of tender youth” translated by Henry Dexter and set to the tune “Kirby Bedon” by the English organist Edward Bunnett.

Seton pp.11 - 15
Early Roman Influence

Two early Poets

Ambrose (c. 339-397)

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Developed Long Meter 8888

Example Today #116 Come Follow Me

#214 I Heard the Bells

Augustine Hymn Definition

“If thou praisest God and singest not, thou utterest no hymn. If thou singest and praisest not God, thou utterest ho hymn. A hymn, then, containeth these three things: song, and praise, and that of God.”

Seton p. 17

Gregorian Chant:

LDS HYMN #69 Al Glory, Laud, and Honor - Theodulph of Orleans ca 760-821

[Goth from Spain]

The Translators:

“As we then use...Greek and Latin hymns we should remember that most do not appear as their writers originally cast then. We expect our hymns to conform to a stereotype that is little more than four years old and is often much younger. As we sing, then, we should remember the debt we owe to their translators. Many godly men and women, ...exercised their skills at the exacting task.”

Allen W. Chatfield (1808-1896) “Songs and Hymns of the Earliest Greek Christian Poets”

Edward Caswall (1814-1878) “Jesus, the very thought of Thee”

LDS HYMN #141

John Mason Neale (1818-1866) “All Glory, Laud, and Honor”

LDS HYMN #69

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Early Medieval Influence

Dark Ages

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)
   “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” Hymn #141

St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)
   Hymn of the Creation “All Creatures of Our God and King” Hymns #62
   Choir Setting “O Sifuni Mungu”

Stephen Langton (d. 1128) Archbishop of Canterbury under King John of Magna Carta fame
   Dies Irae “Day of Wrath”
   Berlioz Rendition. [Also done by Palestrina, Mozart, Brahms, Verdi, and Dvorak]
   See Seton p. 25 for Text

Early Notation

Examples

   “Sumner is icumen in” Thirteenth-century secular round. [find this]
Reformation Influence

German Influence

John Wycliff (c. 1330-1384) & Jan Hus [John Huss] (c.1371-1415)

First use of Hymn Books in the vernacular. They exalted Jesus as the one Mediator between God and man.

Hymn Definition: Christian Hymn

“A song, normally metrical [i.e., having poetic measurements] and strophic [set in verse form], used in worship” Seton p. 29

Augustine’s early definition would outlaw hymns of meditation, description, exhortation, or teaching. Thus an “Ideal Hymn” has something to communicate, is scriptural, poetic yet simple and singable, theistic [relates to God], preferably Christocentric [centers on Christ], orthodox [in respect of doctrine], and is truly ecumenical [usable by most Christians].

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

“Ein’ Feste Burg” Or “A Mighty Fortress” Hymn #68

Both words and tune attributed to Luther

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

Early writer of Hymns

“Now Thank We All Our God” Hymn #95 Tune = Nun Danket

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Gave the German Church 60 Hymns

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” Hymn #72
“He Is Risen” Hymn #199

Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612) Composer

“O Savior, Thou Who Wearest a Crown” Hymn #197

Story of text and tune
**French Influence**

Calvinists  
No Hymns!!!!!!  Psalms were the only texts.  
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Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510)  
Tune for “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”  Hymn #242  
Tune = Old Hundredth  
See British Influence  Thomas Ken

**British Influence**

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The Bay Psalm Book

William Billings, Thomas Hastings, and Lowell Mason

Thomas Ken (1637-1711)  
Doxology “Praise God, from Whom All blessings Flow”  Hymn #242  
A great courageous Christian bishop, Lord Macauly wrote: “His moral character seems to approach, as near as human infirmity permits, to the ideal perfection of Christian virtue.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)  
“The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare”  Hymn #109

William Croft (1678-1727)  
The composer who wrote the tune “St. Anne” that is used for “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”  Hymn #31  
Words were by the famous Isaac Watts.
Isaac Watts & Charles Wesley

British Influence Cont.

Isaac Watts’ Contributions to the 1985 Hymnal (Texts only)
Ties with Anonymous for the most Hymn texts by non-LDS poet at nine.

#31 O God, Our Help in Ages Past
#74 Praise Ye the Lord
#79 With All the Power of Heart and Tongue
#88 Great God, Attend While Zion Sings
#90 From All That Dwell below the Skies
#119 Come, We That Love the Lord
#147 Sweet Is the Work
#192 He Died! The Great Redeemer Died
#201 Joy to the World
#317 Sweet Is the Work (Women’s Arr.)

Charles Wesley’s Contributions to the 1985 Hymnal (Texts only)

#66 Rejoice, the Lord Is King!
#102 Jesus, Lover of My Soul
#118 Ye Simple Souls Who Stray
#200 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today
#209 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
#217 Come, Let Us Anew
Methodists Movement

Isaac Watts History (1674-1748) “Father of English Hymnody”

Born in Southampton, some distance from London. Undersized, rather puny infant. Father was an independent minister. Son Isaac shared those independent views. His hymns have a universal doctrinal nature that are still sung over 300 years later.

His poems reflect the Old Testament culture contained in the Psalms and retain a strong Calvinistic austerity. They display a wide range of subject matter. The Person and Work of Jesus is reflected in many of his Hymns.

His Hymns When I Survey the Wondrous Cross and Abide With Me Tis Eventide are ranked as two of the greatest ever written.

John Wesley History (1703-1791) Founder of Methodism

Fifteenth of 19 children. Father was an educated but frustrated and ineffective Church of England rector. He was stuck in a poverty-stricken ministry in an ignorant rural community at Epworth in Lincolnshire. Mother was a very talented but overburdened child-bearer whose sterling though rigid qualities helped produce the genius that shone in her two famous sons. In spite of their fathers poverty both sons were educated at Oxford.

John accepted a mission all in 1735 as a chaplain in Georgia in the New World. He remained there until 1738 when he returned to England. Being reunited with his brother they found the spiritual horizons of the area broadened and experienced a deep fellowship with the Moravian missionaries during their trans-Atlantic crossings. As years progressed John became though reluctant the natural leader of Methodism. His brother Charles devotedly aided him in less public ways. Charles produced an almost endless flow of Hymns that captivated the souls of hundreds of thousands of eighteenth-century men and women.

Supervised the publishing of the first hymn book printed in America, The Collection of Psalms and Hymns - 1737.

Charles Wesley History (1708-1788) Brother of John

In 1735 he was appointed secretary to General Oglethorpe, the founder and governor of the new colony in the New World. John accompanied him when they went to the New World.

Charles produced 7,270 Hymns texts. Examples being form LDS Hymns is “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” and “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” which is set to a tune written by Mendelssohn.

The most famous of all Methodist Hymns is “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” HYMNS #102

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

Contemporary of Isaac Watts, born in London, the youngest of twenty children. He was a dissenting minister. Composed about 370 Hymns

“How Gentle God’s Commands” Hymns #125
**Baptist Movement**

Anne Steele (1716-1778)

Injected another creedal emphasis into Hymnody. Her verses are subjective but with less morbid. They reveal a reverential, worshipful setting that brings glory to God and uplifts those that sing her hymns.

“Great God, To Thee My Evening Song”   LDS Hymn #164

William Williams (1717-1791)

Brought a revival spirit to the Welsh valleys where he traveled over 3000 miles on horseback annually. He was a poet, writing more than eigh hundred hymns in Welsh and a hundred more in English.

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah”   LDS Hymn # 83

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